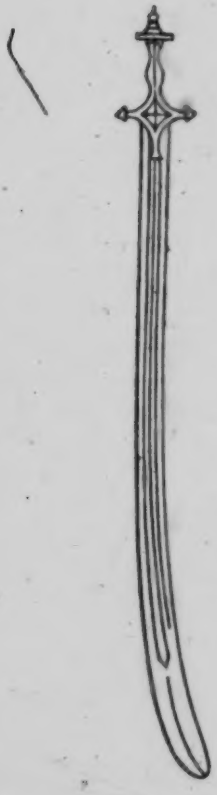
6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

military element in Malabar. The opponents who faced each other with the sariravadi or quarter staff, stood 30 feet apart, and, as if under the same stimulus, each kicked one leg high in the air, a la cancan, gave several lively bounds in the air, held their staff horizontally in front with outstretched arms, came down *slowly* on the haunches, placed the staff on the ground, bent over and touched it with the forehead. With a sudden bound they were again on their feet, and after some preliminary pirouetting went for each other tooth and nail. 526

The sword play which one sees during festive ceremonies, a marriage or the like, done by the hereditary retainers who fight imaginary foes and destroy and vanquish opponents with much contortion of body, always indulge in much of this preliminary overture to their performance. There is always, by way of preliminary, a high kick in the air, followed by squatting on the haunches, bounding high, turning, twisting, pirouetting, and all the time swinging the sword unceasingly above, below, behind the back, under the arm or legs—in ever so many impossible ways.



Nâyar swords and shields are figured in the illustration. The shields are made of wood covered with leather, usually coloured bright red. Within the boss are some hard seeds, or metal balls loose in a small space, so that there is a jingling sound like that of the small bells on the ankles of the dancer, when the shield is oscillated or shaken in the hand. The swords are those which were used ordinarily for fighting. There are also swords of many patterns for processional and other purposes, more or less ornamented about the handle and half way up the blade ; but the one which is figured will suffice to show what the Nâyar fighting sword was like. The smaller shields are now used in play. 714 411 [531]